Bike Lab Feedback Session #2 Notes

April 1, 2015

In attendance:
Allen
Ari
Siyee
Tamir
Sam
Robin Bryan
Chris
Joy Taylor
Tristan
Alana Lajoie-O'Malley

Facilitated by:
Andrée Forest

Context

The following notes were taken at the second in a series of UWSA Bike Lab (the Lab) community meetings. These meetings are intended to provide feedback on current Lab operating conditions, and guide the Lab into the summer and following academic year.

Format

The meeting contained two main segments: an open format feedback session with a guided question, and a dot voting exercise to prioritize action items based on the meeting from March 23.

This document contains central themes of discussion and compiles the prioritized goals set by participants.

Discussion Notes

During the course of our open discussion, the following question was asked: What are the ideal day-to-day roles at the lab? The following are comments and themes that emerged through discussion:

1) Desire to have more, but at minimum three, volunteers in the spring, summer and fall.

2) More defined roles for volunteers during drop-in hours.

Currently, the lab is open when there is at least one Lead Mechanic (LM) and one volunteer. However, especially when it is busy, there need to be more volunteers in order

to avoid bottlenecks. Not only is it crucial to have more volunteers present, but better delineation of what each volunteer is responsible for as well. Note that a single volunteer can have many possible roles, but it be decided during each shift what those roles will be given the volunteers scheduled.

3) Importance of ambassador role.

If all volunteers are working with people on bikes, there is not always someone dedicated to welcoming people, having them sign waivers, and triaging. These tasks make for smooth running of operations, but when there are only two volunteers, these tasks do not always get picked up consistently.

4) Reimagining of the Lead Mechanic role, introducing Sign-Off role.

Given the high level of expertise held by the LM, and the fact that volunteers and users often have questions for the LM, it was suggested that LMs should not take on any users with bikes, but rather float, answer questions, and sign-off on bikes leaving the lab. Having too many tasks resting on the LM's shoulders creates a bottleneck.

Rather than needing a LM to sign-off on bikes, it was suggested to have a training designation specifically for the ability to sign-off on bikes rather than having to know the A-Z of bike mechanics as is currently required by a LM.

5) Introduction of more types of open hours.

Currently, there are open drop-in times, Fab Lab, and community programming. There is a desire to have volunteer-only hours, and possibly bike-build specific hours. Because it is difficult to work on one's own bike during busy times, as well as the difficulty in helping users who would like to build a bike while also trying to help those with more minor technical needs, there should be different types of open hours to be as efficient as possible.

Note that the Lab has an added challenge here given that it is an open-air, visible venue, unlike the Bike Dump or the W.R.E.N.C.H. Special consideration should be paid to making sure there is ample communication, signage and understanding by volunteers to indicate when public drop-in hours are and how they differentiate from other programming, so that volunteers are not put in the difficult position of turning people away.

Goal Prioritizing Exercise

After an opening discussion, participants were asked to prioritize the goals based on the March 23 session. They were asked to vote using three blue dots to identify "things that you think are high priority for the lab in the next year," and two red dots to indicate "things that are high priority but that feel beyond your control."

The top 5 goals were (in no particular order):

a) **Infrastructure: Source easily accessible, adequate storage space (6 red)**
b) **Governance: Identify and take steps to address bottlenecks in volunteer development and decision making (3 red, 3 blue)**
c) **Mechanic training: Continue to refine mechanic training models and modules with more hands-on learning (5 blue)**
d) **Mechanic training: Re-evaluate mechanical standards for volunteers and lead mechanic model (3 blue, 1 red)**
e) **Infrastructure: Develop all-hours outdoor bike servicing station (4 blue)**

No other single goal had more than 2 dots. One item to note that had more than one red dot was: Adopt a deliberate part-sourcing strategy that includes opportunities to purchase a wider variety of items for at a discounted rate

Questions were asked to parse out b) Governance: Identify and take steps to address bottlenecks in volunteer development and decision making (3 red, 3 blue).

Comments:
There's a sense of not being empowered to effect specific change. It's not clear, as a volunteer, what changes you can make and what things you cannot change.

Roles of staff should be to delegate and to empower volunteers, not as ultimate decision makers (though there are some that need to be made). Enabling volunteer action is crucial.

There should be a way for suggestions and comments to make their way from volunteers to those who can make decisions or give them the okay to go forward on projects.

Examples of such suggestions:

- Having a large diagram of a bike with all the parts in the lab.
- Whiteboard in lab for internal communications.
- Having a place online to make suggestions and propose projects, like Google forms.

Next step: Further feedback will be gathered from late April-early May online.

Summary of dot votes: each coloured word represents one dot for either colour. Blue: Things that you think are high priority for the lab in the next year.
Red: Things that are high priority but that feel beyond your control.

1) Academics
    a. Develop opportunities for students to gain academic credit for work invested in the Lab
    b. Build substantive partnership with a professor or class in order to ensure renewal of academic opportunities

2) Infrastructure
    a. Source easily accessible, adequate storage space
    b. Make necessary changes to ensure physical accessibility of Lab
    c. Create opportunity and location for parts donations to be made easily
    d. Develop all-hours outdoor bike servicing station

3) Parts Sourcing
    a. Adopt a deliberate part-sourcing strategy that includes opportunities to purchase a wider variety of items for at a discounted rate

4) Active Transportation Advocacy
    a. Engage with UWinnipeg admin to develop joint strategy for cycling infrastructure around the University

5) Outreach and Special Events
    a. Develop community engagement goals and strategy
    b. Act as a promoter of cycling both on and off campus
    c. Make specific, concerted effort to better engage faculty and staff as users and volunteers
    d. Participate with UW Active Transportation Working Group
    e. Partner with local cycling trail-building groups

6) Governance
    a. Better engage UWinnipeg administrators to ensure widespread awareness of the mandate and activities of the Lab
    b. Solidify long-term funding strategy and plan
    c. Identify and take steps to address bottlenecks in volunteer development and decision making

7) Mechanic Training
    a. Continue to refine mechanic training models and modules with more hands on learning

b. Increase access to the Lab for volunteers in order to gain the experience needed to be a Lead Mechanic
c. Provide opportunities for advanced workshops
d. Reevaluate mechanical standards for volunteers and lead mechanic model

8) Operations
   a. Increase number of volunteers qualified to open to lab to increase hours
   b. Host more events, such as the Party Bike or Dirty Bike
   c. Consider ways to be open on the weekend
   d. Improve signage to include announcements and clear hours on the outside of the Lab
   e. Streamline purchasing, ordering, physical repair and maintenance in the Lab
   f. Maintain as much flexibility as possible within the Lab
   g. Continue to pursue new ways to ensure an accessible, non-threatening environment
   h. Better cleaning and organization protocols

9) Volunteers
   a. Create stronger volunteer structure that includes incentives for progression, such as certificates or letters of recommendation
   b. Generate strategic recruitment and retention strategy
   c. Build staff volunteer base

10) Programming
   a. Empower volunteers to lead mechanic workshops
   b. Continue community mechanic training programs, specifically with youth
   c. Create workshops specifically targeted to faculty and staff members
   d. Build partnerships and programming opportunities with cycling organizations, such as Bike Winnipeg or CAN Bike